

Weekly National Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON: THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1864.

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By GALE & SEATON.
JAMES C. WELLS, ASSOCIATE EDITOR.
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THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1864.

A QUESTION OF LITERARY CRITICISM.

Our reference to the historical question which has been raised in a few minds with regard to the ethnological extraction of Hamlet appears to have suggested to the mind of one of our readers a renewal of the similar question which has been mooted in literature with regard to the nationality of "Othello, the Moor," as conceived and sketched by Shakespeare. On this point we have received the following communication:

WASHINGTON, MARCH 28, 1864.
Messrs. Editors: Seeing your article this morning on the subject of "Hamlet," I am encouraged to ask if you will not oblige me by giving some information as to the race to which "Othello" belongs. Shakespeare calls him the "Moor," yet in various prints and representations he is described as a negro, with the woolly hair and characteristics of that race. I ask for information, and trust you will be disposed to enlighten the ignorance of a LADY SUBSCRIBER.

It is quite true, as our fair correspondent observes, that many eminent artists and scholars have supposed that Othello, as conceived and drawn by Shakespeare, is justly represented in the character of a negro. He is so sketched by Retzsch in his Outline, and he is so presented by the modern German artist Hildebrandt, of the Dusseldorf School, in the picture which long formed the chief attraction of the "Dusseldorf Gallery" in New York. So accurate and learned a scholar as John Quincy Adams has also written in support of the thesis that Othello was a negro.

But it seems to us that our fair correspondent has said all that need be said, and all that can be said, in reply to such representations when she premises her inquiry whether Othello was a negro by saying that "Shakespeare calls him a Moor." If Shakespeare calls him a Moor, we may be pretty sure that the great dramatist knew what he meant, and did not use the term Moor as a synonym for Ethiopian. The scene of the drama is laid in Venice, and, as is well suggested by Mr. Richard Grant White, the accomplished scholar and editor of Shakespeare, the Venetians had nothing to do with negroes that we know of, and could not have in the natural course of things; whereas, with their over-the-way neighbors, the Moors, they were continually in contact. These were a warlike, civilized, and enterprising race, which could furnish an Othello. It is not so probable (and Shakespeare, we must suppose, had an eye to the fact when he calls Othello "the Moor") that the negro race could have furnished to Venice the valiant captain he has portrayed.

The careful reader of Shakespeare is aware that he frequently ascribes (or makes his characters ascribe) to the Moors certain physical characteristics which, whether stated with poetic license or in the language of contumely, certainly symbolize strongly with the distinctive traits of the negro race. Thus Rodrigo, the Venetian gentleman, calls Othello "the thick lips;" Brabantio, lamenting the ill-assorted match of his daughter Desdemona, deprecates that she had "run from her guard to the sooty bosom of such a thing" as Othello; Desdemona, justifying her passion, says she "saw Othello's visage in his mind," thus implying that his face made against him in the eyes of the world; Iago, predicting the eventual decline of Desdemona's affection for "the Moor," suggests to Rodrigo that "her eye must be fed," and asks "what delight shall she have to look on the devil?" and again, the same Mephistophelean Iago invites Cassio to join "a brace of Cyprus galants" in a "stoup of wine" to the health of black Othello; Othello himself, yielding to the first suggestion of Desdemona's inconstancy, suspends it on a "happy" suggestion by the thought "for I am black," and when opposed by the full conviction of her guilt, he exclaims,

"Her name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
As mine own face;"

and honest Emilia imports that there was some sensible incongruity between Desdemona and Othello when she reproaches the latter by saying that the former was "too fond of her most filthy bargains."

It is from such intimations as these that the impression has been derived by many scholars and artists that Shakespeare meant to represent the Moor as nothing else than a negro.

In reply to all this it is proper to say that Shakespeare ascribes in other plays precisely the same characteristics to personages who incontestably were "Moors" without being negroes. So Portia, in the Merchant of Venice, closes her heart against the addresses of the Prince of Morocco—a royal Moor and certainly not a negro—by saying, "If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me." The Prince himself prays her, "mildly me not for my complexion;" and she, when he has sealed his rejection by selecting the wrong casket, rejoins, "may all of his complexion choose me so." And yet he was not "jetty black, but tawny;" for the stage direction in the old quartos is: "Enter Morocco, a tawny Moor, all in white."

It is plain that in Shakespeare's day, as in our own, there were those who supposed some of the Moors to be so black that little distinction was made in the popular mind and parlance between them and negroes. They were "blacks and Moors," whence

the compound word "black-moor." Thus Pandarus, in the play of Troilus and Cressida, testifies of his fair niece, "I care not as she were a black-moor; 'tis all one to me." The disgusting Aaron, in Titus Andronicus, is such a black-moor. He speaks himself of his "fleece of woolly hair," (act II, scene 3.) Bassanio calls him the "swarthy Cimmerian;" Lavinia styles him "raven-colored;" Titus invokes vengeance on him as one who "comes in likeness of a coal-black Moor;" and in the second scene of the 4th act Shakespeare labors to portray the union of Tamora and Aaron in colors designed to represent it as most repulsive and unnatural.

Now, it is plain that Othello is not such a Moor as Aaron, but, because he bore in his visage "the shadowed livery of the burnished sun," he was subject in the diction of poetic exaggeration, in the contumacious dialect of his enemies, and in the language of self-deprecation inspired by his own misgivings on the score of his swarthy complexion, to all the epithets which might have been used to characterize an African. And, while we must presume that Shakespeare knew enough of the Moors to be aware that they were not negroes, it is quite probable, as Mr. Richard Grant White suggests, that "his notion of their distinctive traits [physiologically speaking] was perhaps neither very true nor very clear."

But his notion of Othello was true and clear enough, we think, to discriminate between a Moor, properly so-called, and one who was a black-moor. There is direct evidence that Othello was a Mauritanian (and therefore not a negro) of lofty lineage. When defending his right and title to love and espouse Desdemona, he is bold to say, (act I, sc. 2,) "I fetch my life and being from men of royal siege," and Iago, when speaking of Othello's contingent retirement from the active command of the Venetian army in the island of Cyprus, points in the following language to Mauritania as the destined and natural place of his retreat. We quote from act IV, sc. 2:

Iago. Sir, there is especial commission come from Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place.

Roderigo. Is that true? Why, then, Othello and Desdemona return again to Venice.

Iago. O, no; he goes to Mauritania, and takes away with him the fair Desdemona, unless she be lured here by some accident, wherein none can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio.

Mauritanian, then, was the home of Othello, and the Mauritanians, it is unnecessary to say, were not negroes. Least of all is it likely that a Mauritanian who derived his lineage from "men of royal siege," that is, from the kingly line of the country, would be a negro.

It may be very true, as Mr. White suggests, that Shakespeare had never seen either a Moor or a negro, and hence he might very naturally confuse their physiological traits; but we do not think any such explanation is necessary to account for the epithets applied to Othello, nor are these epithets incompatible with Shakespeare's recognition of his hero's Moorish quality as distinct from the physiological characteristics which compose the type of the negro race. That a man of his perspicacity and learning should confound a prince of the nation which built the Alhambra with a representative of that degraded race which, when he wrote, was supplying slaves to the British plantations in the West Indies, is hardly possible. From such an error he would be preserved not so much, it may be admitted, by the instinctive prejudice which perhaps causes most American readers to revolt at the thought, as by his general knowledge of history and by his regard for the dramatic proprieties and probabilities of his story. He may have thought the Moors of his day blacker than they really were, but he could not have supposed that they were identical with the negro race.

If the Great Dramatist was without the social prejudices engendered by the visible enslavement of the negro race, and by contact with its degraded subjects, he has at least made it plain that he was no advocate of what Mr. Wendell Phillips calls, in the latest political sense, "the sublime mingling of races." Else there would be no point in the reply he puts in the mouth of Claudio, when, in the play of "Much Ado About Nothing," that young lord of Florence being asked by Leonato if he is "yet determined" to marry a certain lady, avers the desperation of his constancy by saying "I'll hold my mind were she an Ethiopian."

THE CONNECTICUT ELECTION.

A general election for State officers and members of the Legislature took place in Connecticut yesterday. Our telegraphic report states that the Republicans have carried the State by a large majority. The following are the names of the candidates of the two parties for State officers:

DEMOCRATIC.—For Governor, Origen S. Seymour, Litchfield. For Lieutenant-Governor, Thomas H. Bond, New Haven. For Secretary of State, James H. Hoyt, Greenwich. For Treasurer, Andrew L. Kidson, New Haven. For Comptroller, Lloyd E. Baldwin, Winham.

REPUBLICAN.—For Governor, William A. Buckingham, Norwich. For Lieutenant-Governor, Roger Averill, Danbury. For Secretary, J. Hammond Trumbull, Hartford. For Treasurer, Gabriel W. Colte, Hartford. For Comptroller, Leman W. Cutler, Watertown.

THE ARKANSAS ELECTION.

The vote required under the President's proclamation was 5,400. The number cast in that portion of the State under the immediate Federal rule will reach nearly 16,000. The following officers are elected:

Isaac Murphy, Governor; C. O. Bliss, Lieutenant-Governor; Secretary of State R. J. T. White; Auditor, J. B. Berry; Treasurer, E. D. Ayer; Attorney General, C. T. Jordan; Judges of the Supreme Court, T. D. W. Yowley, C. A. Harper, E. Baker; Members of Congress, D. M. Jacks, Helena district; J. M. Johnson, Johnson county; A. C. Rogers claims a majority for him for Congress in the second district.

THE ALMADEN MINE CASE.

The Supreme Court yesterday rendered its decision in the great quicksilver mine case, reversing that of the court below in favor of the United States, and affirming the validity of the survey under which the claimant holds.

Lieut. Gen. Grant has returned from Fort Monroe, and was yesterday in consultation for an hour or two with the Secretary of War. It is supposed he will soon leave for the Army of the Potomac.

CONGRESS—MONDAY.

Amongst the business in the Senate yesterday was the reception of a communication from the Secretary of War, in reply to Mr. Johnson's resolution of March 30th, calling for a copy of the order from General Dix to Provost Marshal Dodge, of Baltimore, in 1861, prior to the November election. The Secretary says that no such order is on the files of the Department, and he has no knowledge of any such.

Mr. SUMNER, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, reported a bill for the assessment and satisfaction of claims of American citizens growing out of French spoliation prior to 1801. He also reported back the House bill on the same subject, which, on his motion, was indefinitely postponed.

Mr. GRIMES made a speech in opposition to the bill from the House to provide for voluntary enlistments of persons in certain States into regiments of other States. He desired, he said, to put himself on record against this bill, before the evils which are to result from it, should it pass, shall be realized. Under the bill States which may not have been successful in filling their quotas could go into States in rebellion and enlist colored men who had been slaves to make their deficiency. To this he had decided objections. Agents will be rushing into these States, and their recruiting will not only be for present but for future drafts. It would render "confusion worse confounded" and demoralize our army.

Messrs. SHERMAN and TRUMBULL also spoke against the bill, and Mr. Wilson in its favor. The subject was then laid over.

In the House of Representatives a resolution, offered by Mr. ARNOLD, calling upon the Secretary of War, if not incompatible with the public interest, to furnish the number of troops called into the service since March, 1861, the quotas from each State, &c. was taken up and adopted.

A resolution offered on a prior day by Mr. ELDRIDGE, calling upon the Secretary of War, if not incompatible with the public interest, for information as to the amount received for commutation for drafted men, and what disposition has been made of the money; also, the number of substitutes purchased by the Department for drafted men, and the amount paid for each, stating where they were procured and whether they were white or black, &c., having been called up, it was, on motion of Mr. STEVENS, laid on the table—yeas 60, nays 46. A similar disposition was made—yeas 64, nays 42—of a resolution offered several days ago by Mr. BROWN, of Wisconsin, calling upon the Secretary of War to furnish the House with the number of negro regiments enlisted, the amount paid for bounty, pay, and expenses of their organization, and how many have been killed and wounded in battle, discriminating between the battles.

The following resolution, reported by Mr. DAVIS, of Maryland, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, was, after some conversational debate, unanimously adopted, yeas 109:

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress of the United States are unwilling by silence to leave the nations of the world under the impression that they are indifferent spectators of the deplorable events now transpiring in the Republic of Mexico; therefore, they think it fit to declare that Mexico does not accord with the people of the United States to acknowledge a Monarchical Government erected on the ruins of any Republican Government in Mexico, under the auspices of any European Power."

NEGRO SUFFRAGE.

The reader will observe by our report of the proceedings had in the Senate on Thursday last, that a majority of that body has decided not to restrict the right of suffrage, and, as we understand, of holding office, in the new Territory of Montana to white male citizens, as has been the custom in organizing new Territories. The vote on the amendment thus making the negro and white citizen "equal before the law" was as follows:

YEAS—Messrs. Brown, Chandler, Clarke, Collamer, Conness, Dixon, Fessenden, Foot, Foster, Grimes, Hale, Harlan, Harris, Howard, Howe, Morgan, Morrill, Pomeroy, Sumner, Wade, Wilkinson, and Wilson—22.

NAYS—Messrs. Buckle, Carlile, Cowan, Davis, Harding, Henderson, Johnson, Lane of Indiana, Nesmith, Powell, Kiddle, Saulsbury, Sherman, Ten Eyck, Trumbull, Van Winkle, and Wiley—17.

As it is probable that few if any negroes will ever emigrate to this remote Territory, it will occur to every reader that the principal motive of those who voted for the amendment must have been to signalize their adhesion to the policy of negro suffrage in the future.

THE RECIPROCITY TREATY.

The report made in the House of Representatives by Mr. WARD, from the Committee on Commerce, on the subject of the reciprocity treaty, recommends the abrogation of the treaty according to its terms—that is, twelve months after the ten years to which it is limited to have force and effect—unless in the mean time another convention shall be entered into which shall be truly reciprocal in its advantages to the Governments and people of the United States and Great Britain. The important feature in the report is that the province of Canada has lately adopted measures of legislation which destroy the reciprocal relations which existed at the date of the negotiation of the treaty by laying duties on articles of merchandise according to their value at the place where they were last bought. The report of the committee states the advantages derived by this country from the right under the treaty to navigate the rivers of the Provinces and the canals communicating between the great Lakes at the Atlantic, and also the rights acquired by which citizens of the United States have free and full enjoyment of the fisheries, in exchange for the provincial right to sell their products in our markets. Proceedings of Boards of Trade of various Northwestern cities are reproduced, representing the mutual advantage of truly reciprocal relations between the United States and the British Provinces.

EDUCATION OF FREEDMEN.

On the 23d of March Gen. Banks issued a military order at New Orleans, providing for the rudimentary instruction of freed negroes in his department. The order constitutes a Board of Education to consist of three members, who are empowered to establish one or more common schools in every school district that may be defined by the Provost Marshal General; to purchase suitable plots and erect school houses upon them; to employ proper teachers; to provide books, stationery, and apparatus; to prescribe a course of study, and to levy a school tax upon the real and personal property within each school district.

The Legislature of Ohio adjourned on Thursday last to the first Tuesday of January, 1865, having been in session since the first Monday of last January. Both branches have been strongly Republican, and the Cincinnati Gazette says that but little difficulty has been encountered in passing those important measures which the exigencies of the times demand.

Gen. Kine, the United States Minister at Rome, writes that the Americans in Rome have made liberal contributions to the Metropolitan Fair for the Sanitary Commission, about to be held in New York, and that the Pope and Cardinal Antonelli have joined in the contributions.

The late Earl of Ellesmere expressed, in a letter to an American friend, his opinion of the British press, as follows: "I write under the government of journalism. We are governed at home and represented abroad by a press which makes us odious to the world."

MARYLAND ELECTION.

To-morrow, the 6th instant, a general election will take place in the State of Maryland to determine whether a Convention shall be held to revise and amend the State constitution, and at the same time to choose members to compose such a Convention in case a majority of the voters shall cast their suffrages in favor of it, the object being to abolish the institution of slavery within the limits of that State. We learn from the Baltimore American, that the judges of election in Cecil county, and probably in some other counties, have adopted the following interrogatories for their guidance in examining the qualifications of voters on the occasion:

QUESTIONS.

1. Service in the Rebel Army. Have you ever served in the rebel army?

2. Aid to them in Armed Rebellion. Have you ever given aid to the rebellion?

3. Comfort and Encouragement to the Rebellion. Have you ever given money to their agents?

4. Disloyalty. Have you ever given comfort or encouragement to the rebellion?

5. Comfort and Encouragement to the Rebellion. Have you ever given money to their agents?

6. Disloyalty. Have you ever given comfort or encouragement to the rebellion?

7. Comfort and Encouragement to the Rebellion. Have you ever given money to their agents?

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CONGRESSIONAL.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE SENATE.

Extracts from Our Daily Reports.

THE CIVIL APPROPRIATION BILL.

Mr. FESSENDEN, from the Finance Committee, reported back the House bill making appropriations for the legislative, executive, and judicial expenses of the Government for the next fiscal year, with amendments raising the appropriation for clerks and messengers in the bureau of the Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Paymaster General, Commissary General and Col. of Ordnance, \$500,000. These are understood to be for persons engaged after to be appointed. The reduction of House appropriations for the Department of Agriculture are over \$50,000, as follows: \$11,000 upon reductions for clerks; collection of agricultural statistics \$8,000; seeds \$10,000; expenses for seed, manure, &c. \$10,000; for experimental garden on reservation No. 3 and expenses \$5,000.

MONTANA TERRITORY.

Mr. WADE called up the bill from the House "to provide a temporary Government for the Territory of Montana."

Mr. WILKINSON moved to amend the fifth section by striking out the words in regard to voters, "every white male inhabitant," and insert "every free male citizen of the United States, and those who have declared their intention to become such, above the age of twenty-one years."

Mr. JOHNSON said that the purpose was evidently to give the elective franchise to colored men, and if those who were freed were to go to these Territories they would hardly be fitted at once for that privilege. The matter should be left to the people of those Territories.

The amendment was adopted by the following vote:

YEAS—Messrs. Brown, Chandler, Clarke, Collamer, Conness, Dixon, Fessenden, Foot, Foster, Grimes, Hale, Harlan, Harris, Howard, Howe, Morgan, Morrill, Pomeroy, Sumner, Wade, Wilkinson, and Wilson—22.

NAYS—Messrs. Buckle, Carlile, Cowan, Davis, Harding, Henderson, Johnson, Lane of Indiana, Nesmith, Powell, Kiddle, Saulsbury, Sherman, Ten Eyck, Trumbull, Van Winkle, and Wiley—17.

The question being then on the passage of the bill—

Mr. POWELL inquired how many inhabitants were in the proposed new Territory?

Mr. WADE said there were twelve thousand inhabitants on this side of the mountains and twelve on the other; and that the population was rapidly increasing on account of new discoveries of gold.

Mr. SUMNER inquired what had suggested the name of the new Territory?

Mr. WADE said he could not answer the question.

Mr. HOWARD said that by reference to his old Latin dictionary he found that the word referred to a mountainous country, such as this was described to be. [Laughter.]

THE RIGHTS OF NEGROES.

The question still being on the passage of the bill—

Mr. SAULSBURY called for the yeas and nays, in consequence of Mr. WILKINSON's amendment, which he said would make negroes voters, but give them no right to hold office after three months' residence. A negro might be elected Governor; but that, he presumed, the people of that Territory would have more good sense than to do.

Mr. JOHNSON suggested to Mr. Wilkinson that if he wished to have all black men vote, and that they should have equal political rights under this bill, it would be better to express this purpose in plain terms rather than use the words "citizen of the United States," because in view of the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case that negroes were not citizens of the United States, there would arise some question in the matter.

Mr. WILKINSON said he desired to let his amendment stand in the form in which it had been adopted, so that there would be no question as to the right of the negro to hold office after three months' residence. A negro might be elected Governor; but that, he presumed, the people of that Territory would have more good sense than to do.

Mr. JOHNSON said that he had no objection to the amendment, but he thought it would be better to let the question stand in the form in which it had been adopted, so that there would be no question as to the right of the negro to hold office after three months' residence. A negro might be elected Governor; but that, he presumed, the people of that Territory would have more good sense than to do.

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